



KINDERTRANSPORT NEWSLETTER

AJR Special Interest Section

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Dear Kinder/Friends

First of all let me wish you a very good Pesach and tell you that I will be spending it with my Israeli family as usual in Israel, so I will be away from 4-15 April, when the real work of organising our Bar/Batmitzvah Party will begin. I had really hoped for more positive support from you regarding your bookings. So many of you seem to wait till the last minute and don't realise the work such an event entails. Our monthly Luncheon meetings are well attended (none in April owing to Pesach, but the next one is 10 May). I hope that on my return I will have your bookings awaiting me.

I am pleased to tell you that Lady Jacobovits has accepted our invitation and will be speaking to us at the Bar/Batmitzvah celebration. Also Judith Romney-Wegner (Professor of Judaic studies from the USA) will be speaking to us about the role of women in Judaism. After lunch, at approx 1.30pm, we will have the pleasure of listening to Jack Davidoff and his quartet who will entertain us with their wonderful lively music Palm Court-style. A well-known TV company has shown interest in filming the event and we will have more details later.

I am at a loss to understand the reluctance of so many of you to book for this special occasion. I remember the clamouring for a place at the suitcase unveiling. Anyway, there are two more reasons for your NON-attendance. The service has to start at 9am, which not only means getting up a bit early even if it is a nice summer's day and, because of that, you can't use your free pass, but car parking is available.

It seems not so long ago that I took part in the USA bi-annual major meeting in Philadelphia, October 2002. I have recently received an invitation to join them at their forthcoming gathering to be held 22-24 October, this time in the Double Tree Hotel, San Francisco. They would welcome Kinder from England. Contact details available from Andrea at the office
Best wishes,

Bertha

In the April issue of *AJR Journal* look out for the profile of Paul and Rose Gotley, both Kinder from Vienna. Though they are very unassuming, their achievements are remarkable. I am sure they only told a fraction of what they achieved and the charities they support. Rose gave me an account of her start of life in England. On reading it for the first time, I was very shocked, all this mentioning of Jesus. But reading it carefully several times, it really struck home. How calculated and underhanded those missionaries were to prey on young, vulnerable children, torn from loving homes, sent to a strange country and starved of affection. An easy target indeed, especially if their family's adherence to Judaism was not very strong. Their method of telling the children to keep their reading and discussions secret, their implying the guilt of the Jews as being the reason for our persecution, and creating a conflict in young, traumatised children, was their way of working. The fact that they only managed to convert ONE of the six children shows how strong was the character of the other five. The home mentioned in the following article was the Sunray, Perranporth, children's home in Cornwall and the children were evacuated from the Highbury Hostel in London. We are given to understand that one of the young men who became a priest, later wrote an apology to the children. Their ages were 11 to 13. In most cases of children being placed in Christian homes, no effort was made to convert them.

I know of a wonderful Christian couple in Wales who for many years have supported and still are supporting one of our Kinder in every way, making sure he is kept in touch with his roots at every Jewish festival. Without their support he could not cope.

Among our varied membership are several Christian Kinder.

They are valued as much as our Jewish ones. At no point in any part of the enrolment form has there ever been a mention of religious belief. It is missionaries only I, personally, object to.

BL

WE WANT YOU!

The sky was cloudless and the sun really warm for early September. Children were shrieking with sheer abandonment and adults were trying hard to stop the noise. There were two exceptions to that scene. One was a group of girls, ages ranging between five and thirteen. They sat quietly in a circle eating their sandwiches. No one spoke but they all looked longingly at a group around a harmonium. A middle-aged lady was playing the instrument and children were singing to the music.

Another set of youngsters was playing competitive games, being supervised by a young man with dark hair and a most infectious smile. Another young man was talking earnestly to a circle of children who were engrossed in what he was saying.

The girls eating sandwiches had now finished their lunch and the tall, upright lady who was guarding them held out a bag to discard any left-overs. As if from nowhere, an elderly gentleman appeared and addressed himself to the woman: "May I introduce myself. I am Ernest Barnehurst and am in charge of the Beach Services Commission on this beach. We are here to entertain our younger holidaymakers and give their parents or guardians a well-earned rest. Would you allow your young charges to join us?"

The children looked up hopefully. "I am Anne Stringfellow." She held out her hand. "As long as you realise I shall be watching all the time, I see no harm in letting them play. That is to say I shall only let the six older ones go; the little ones stay with me. I must warn you their English is not very good. They are refugees from the Nazis and some of them came over on the last Kindertransport."

She turned to the children. "Did you understand what this gentleman said?", she asked, speaking slowly and distinctly. They nodded. "Do you want to join the other children?", Miss Stringfellow inquired. As with one voice they shouted, "Yes, please."

They scrambled up and ran towards the harmonium, not waiting for Ernest Barnehurst to show the way. He followed at a more leisurely pace and whispered something into the ear of the harmonium-playing lady. She winked at him and smiled at the new guests who had gathered around her.

She soon stopped playing and put her arms around as many of the newcomers she could reach. She introduced herself. "My name is Angela Mountbank and I welcome you to our meeting. Can you understand me? The children nodded. She walked over to a table with little cards, safety pins and pens. "Give me your first names and I will pin the card on you so I know who you are." She spoke slowly and carefully. The children made a line and gave their names, some of them quite strange-sounding to an English ear.

"Are you Jewish?", Miss Mountbank asked. The children nodded. Soon the little group was divided amongst the game players, the cluster around the harmonium and a few with the earnest young man. Miss Mountbank made a point of teaching the words of the hymn she was playing to the newcomers.

"Marching beneath the banner, fighting beneath the cross, trusting in him who saved us, ne'er shall we suffer loss. Singing the songs about the homeland..."

The foreign children perked up; they could identify with that sentiment. They may not have understood everything but singing songs of homeland meant a lot to them. Miss Mountbank smiled at them a lot and made them feel special and wanted.

The girls who had joined the earnest young man were welcomed with a smile. "I know a few words in German. One is "Krieg". I was in Germany just before the war and I used to say "Krieg?" with a question mark at the end, meaning 'will there be a war?' and they all said "No Krieg". You see, you just can't trust anyone except our Lord Jesus."

The refugee children felt they were really wanted by all the people from the Beach Service Commission. They were given the love they so badly needed. One day Miss Mountbank came to see the Matron in charge of the children's home. She invited the six eldest children to a "Sausage Sizzle" in the sand dunes.

"I am sorry we have no money to spare for outings," the Matron explained. "Oh no, they will be our guests and I shall personally walk them home for you. Those poor children don't have much fun in their lives. I am sure you wouldn't begrudge them an outing." "Of course not, you are right. Thank you very much."

The six girls were excited when told of the treat; they thought they were the luckiest people alive. They had learnt a lot more hymns and been told a lot more stories about Jesus and were enjoying all of it.

The great evening came. Normally the girls had to be in bed by eight o'clock and tonight they were going out and did not have to be home till ten. The rest of the children were pleased for them.

A campfire had been made between the sand dunes and sausages were cooked over the open flames. The hot meat was put in a roll and the foreign children thought

they hadn't tasted anything so good. After the food they sang hymns and then Mr Barnehurst got up and said: "As you know, we have some refugee children amongst us who have no money. I am sure you will all dig deep in your pockets to pay for their food."

The children's English had improved in the last few weeks and they were able to understand enough to be embarrassed to hear that the other children were asked to contribute to their food. They were told to say thank you to everyone, which they did.

The moon was shedding a silvery light over the sea and the dunes. It was a welcome change from their normal routine. They helped with the tidying up and then Miss Mountbank put her arms around them like a protective cloak and walked with them across the dunes to the village. Everything seemed to be bathed in the pearly light; a mist rose over the gorse of the sand dunes and the sea for once murmured gently. It had been a magical evening.

"You must have heard of St Paul?", Miss Mountbank asked. Yes, they nodded vigorously. They had learned a lot about the New Testament from the young men. "Well, he saw the light on the road to Damascus." They didn't quite understand but they listened carefully. "This will happen to you tonight. Why do you think Jews are persecuted?" The children shook their heads; they did not know. "It's because they can't see that Jesus is the Messiah. As soon as they understand that, all will be well and everyone will love them."

Suddenly it all made sense. That must be the reason why Jews were persecuted over the centuries - because they were still waiting for the Messiah.

"I will give you a treasure." Miss Mountbank squeezed their shoulders. "Here is the gospel, read it carefully every day but it must be a secret between us. Some people may not like you seeing the light. It is a farewell gift from all of us for we are leaving tomorrow."

The girls hugged her and wept and thanked her for her precious gift. They each slept with their gospel under their pillows that night. For the next few weeks they held secret prayer meetings squashed in the lavatory. After that it lost its excitement. One of the six girls converted for she genuinely believed them. **The rest saw another light.**

*Rose Gotley (née Osterreicher)
(Vienna)*



*At their monthly luncheon meeting at the AJR Day Centre, West Hampstead, KT-
AJR members discuss future activities*

LETTERS

Dear Bertha

THE LAST PRE-WAR BARMITZVAH IN BERLIN?

The forthcoming Bar/Batmitzvah celebration has made me recall my experience. I was fortunate to have a Barmitzvah celebration in Berlin on 14 January 1939, conducted at very short notice by Rabbi Swarsenski. My parents were very much aware of their Jewishness – Father was denounced by his erstwhile partner for making anti-Nazi remarks, and imprisoned in September 1933 for about two weeks and deprived of his appointment as a Notary – but the family, apart from Mother's mother, was not at all observant. I did not attend Cheder. In April 1938 I was invited to his Barmitzvah by Wolfgang Heymann, a fellow pupil from the Französische Gymnasium. This led me to ask my parents to enrol me in classes at the Prinzregentenstrasse Synagogue, and I attended together with two other friends, Heinz Cohn and Wolfgang Crohn, who started classes at the same time.

At Kristallnacht Father was arrested and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he remained until the end of December 1938. The Synagogue went up in flames. Of course, we had abandoned all thought of having a Barmitzvah.

On Thursday 12 January 1939 Mother had an unexpected phone call. Rabbi Swarsenski asked if I would like to have my Barmitzvah two days later, together with my two friends and about twelve other boys! Father was too ill from ill-treatment in the KZ to take part in the decision but the invitation was accepted with alacrity. I did not even know the *brachoth* let alone the Torah portion, and had to be coached by a family friend. The celebration took place on 14 January, in a synagogue which was

situated inside a block of flats and undamaged. The neighbours objected to it being torched. I have not been able to locate it since.

With the help of a medical cousin and 'M & B', a forerunner of antibiotics, Father was given a boost so that he could attend the service, and the very festive meal which Mother somehow managed to get together. She got out all our table silver, which was due to be handed over at any time to the 'Pfandleihe', the official pawn broker, but it sparkled in the candlelight. It was very much a day to remember, the last gathering of family and friends. Father was ill for months afterwards, but with Mother was able to come to the UK.

I have lost touch with Wolfgang Heymann and my other two friends, one of whom came to the U.K. and re-emigrated to Australia.

Victor Simons (formerly Schneider)

Dear Bertha

My personal Kindertransport Reunion 5.2.2004. One morning after the second Kindertransport Reunion, I received a letter from Margit asking me if I was the same person whom she had met in 1939 in the Lake District, the day I arrived in England, having found my name in the Kindertransport book.

Instead of writing a laborious letter, I immediately phoned her in Chicago to tell her that indeed I was the same person, and all I could really remember was that her first words to me were "You are safe now and can say whatever you want. Nobody will mind." I believe we probably spent two weeks together.

Last week Margit decided on the spur of the moment (and the fact that she got a cheap flight) to go and see her children in Lucca (Italy), and on her way home to Pittsburg, where she now lives, she decided to come and see me as well as other friends in Portsmouth and London.

So on Sunday 1 February 2004 we went to Stansted Airport to pick Margit up, and I recognised her immediately from her description despite not having seen her for 64 years.

Needless to say we had lots and lots to talk about, and even had time for her to meet one of my daughters and three of my grandchildren. It was a very emotional day, but a very happy reunion, made possible only because of your organisation of the Kindertransport Reunions.

I am sure that I am not the only person to say THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the opportunity to meet with long lost-friends.

Ellen Cook (née Schlomann) and Margit Diamond

Dear Bertha

Over the years in which I have taught the Holocaust the emphasis has always been on the facts of how it came about and the conditions in the camps. It is hearing people like yourself and other Kindertransportees that brings home to me that there is more to suffering than the physical aspect. To be wrenched apart from your parents is, I know, not pleasant but for it to happen under the conditions that you experienced is beyond an adequate description. I spent a couple of weeks in a nursing home when I was about five as my mother was ill. I can still see, hear and smell that dormitory. Each story I have read has helped me to realise that so often you all make light of the dreadful circumstances that you found yourselves in. So many survivors make a point of emphasising how grateful they are to the people of England for taking them in that it makes me ashamed of the way we so casually talk of "asylum seekers" today,

ignoring the suffering so many of them are experiencing. Your talk and your book have been eye-openers to me. If there is ever a situation where you need a teacher to help you with your work, please get in touch with me.

Chris Archbold

Dear Bertha

On behalf of myself and Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein I would like to thank you for presenting us with a copy of the Kindertransport 60th Anniversary publication. This is a valuable addition to our synagogue resources.

*Rabbi Rachel Benjamin
Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue*

Dear Bertha

You asked me how it came about that I did not celebrate my Barmitzvah. In October 1939 at the age of 11 I was taken in as a boarder by Oswestry School, an old, established public boarding school founded in 1407 and still going strong – Church of England, endowed. I stayed there as a boarder for the following six years. When I was 12 a rabbi came to see me at the school and explained to me that for a Jewish boy aged 12 it was proper that I should be prepared for my Barmitzvah and that he would be happy to do so, but there were problems. As there was no Jew living in Oswestry and the nearest synagogue was in Birmingham, some fifty miles away, personal tuition would not be possible. However, there was a way round this. I would take a correspondence course, which he would personally supervise. True to his word, a few days later there arrived in the post a bundle of papers with instructions for how I was to proceed. During “Prep” (homework preparation) I did my work when the supervising teacher asked me what work I was doing. I explained I was doing preparatory work for my Barmitzvah and he then asked me “Did the headmaster know I was doing this work?” I said I did not think so. A day or two later I was called into the headmaster’s study. He explained to me that there was a clear understanding with the Refugee Committee that the school would be happy to take me in and that I would be treated in exactly the same way as all the other boarders, no better and no worse, and all that was expected of me was that I should conform to all the usual procedures and routines of the school and, as Hebrew studies were not a usual routine of the school, I would need to give it up. It was no great hardship for me to give up this work as there were lots more interesting things for me to do, so I was quite relieved to hear this news from the headmaster.

Now, some sixty years later, thanks to your most thoughtful initiative, I very much look forward to having my Barmitzvah celebrated in common with other similarly placed “Barmitzvah Boys” in a collective Barmitzvah ceremony on Thursday morning 3 June at the Stanmore and Canons Park United Synagogue, London Road, Stanmore, when Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen will officiate.

With best wishes.

Sigi Faith

Dear Bertha Leverton

Dame Judi Dench has asked me to thank you for your letter and to send her apologies for not responding personally.

We are still finalising Judi’s schedule for the rest of the year but, at the moment, it looks as if she will be in the United States in May. I know that Judi was

very pleased to have been asked to narrate *Into the Arms of Strangers* and found the experience very moving. I am sure that Judi would be happy to join you on 2 May if her schedule allows, but I am afraid that it is unlikely that she will be available.

Sue Jennings
Personal Assistant to Dame Judi Dench

Dear Bertha

Mr Buechler is to be congratulated on producing such a worthwhile video of the ceremony under very difficult conditions. Not only I, but also my children and grandchildren were moved watching this very meaningful event.

Ruth Tuckman

Dear Mrs Leverton

During your most interesting talk last Friday at the Museum of London 'Memories of the Kindertransport' I wondered if the three refugees who lived with my uncle at the beginning of the war could have arrived in England by that means of transport.

My uncle was Bertie J Waygood – he lived at Heaton Moor nr Stockport & Manchester, with his sister Jenny. The first two refugees were brothers Tommy and Harry Bamberger, who came from Vienna, where their father was a furrier. Their mother also visited them at one stage. They were extremely pleasant boys who spoke very good English. After a while (I can't remember how long) they left and went to America (possibly New York), where they changed their name to Briggs. Tommy joined the US army and I am almost sure that he was killed at Caen.

When they left, another boy, Klaus Gunter Gurevich Michaelis (? spelling), lived with my uncle and he stayed for several years. Klaus attended Burnage High School where, I believe, he became head boy. He eventually left and I am sure that he too went to America.

It would be nice to know how they eventually got on – I have thought about them many times, and your talk made me think of the happy hours I spent with them. There is just a slight chance that they were 'Kindertransport children'.

The boys would know me as Rhona Waygood and I lived in Macclesfield, Cheshire. I do appreciate your help, for which I must say thank you very much indeed.

Rhona Hunter

Dear Andrea

In the summer of 1938 my parents took in a German Jewish Kindertransport child. Her name was Marianne Biltz and she was six years old.

We do remember certain events: Marianne (Janni to us) was with us for some three years, and then an aunt appeared and took Janni to live with her and we kept in touch. Subsequently Janni's parents escaped from Germany, went to America, and sent for Janni. My memory is that she was only a quarter Jewish – one Jewish grandparent, but enough for Hitler.

I was eleven and my sister was six and we lived in Wolverhampton, where our father was a headmaster. Our family name was Welch (parents: John GE and Elizabeth Welch).

My sister and I would like to know where Janni is, if she is still alive and would like to make contact, if she were willing.

Mrs Beryl Norman
Email: bbbnorman@hotmail.com

Dear Bertha

I hope Philip Engelberg will not mind if I comment on his contribution in the last newsletter. There was little that was legendary about the Jewish Brigade. Stark realism was the order of the day, based on Ben-Gurion's saying "We shall fight the war as if there was no Mandate and fight the Mandate as if there was no war". Whilst the war was raging the Brigade fought valiantly.

Once the armistice was signed the primary consideration was to extricate as many as possible of our brethren from the horrors of the camps throughout Europe.

I am somewhat surprised that yet another film has been made as I thought the definitive account was the one made in the United States some years back, called "In our own Hands". Southgate AJEX gave a public viewing of it about a year ago and I have a copy in which the sound is faulty. The film itself does however give a true reflection of the Brigade's efforts.

Philip will also have to forgive my questioning his figure of 6,000 volunteers. There were three battalions of the Palestine Regiment, totalling some 3,000 men. Let us not forget the much disliked Military Police. The ancilliary services, such as artillery, ordnance, medical and engineers, were attached to the Jewish Brigade Group and only very few were Jewish. It has to be said that when stationed in Northern Italy, there were two transport companies, RASC (178 and 179), stationed nearby. These were not part of the Brigade Group, although both were manned by Palestinian Jews. In fact they provided the logistic facilities for the post-war work. I doubt, however, if their number totalled 3,000. But let's not get involved in the numbers game.

One can question as to how I know all this - for my sins I was posted from the 3rd Battalion to the record section of the Brigade first to Brussels and finally outside Hamburg, where my sad job was to record the postings of individual members after its disbandment. Those that joined in Palestine were, with specific exceptions, returned to Sarafand. Those that joined in the UK ended up in Bielefeld awaiting posting to other British regiments. I, by osmosis, was the final Brigadenick to transfer myself out into the RASC.

Herbert Haberberg

Dear Bertha

Thank you so much for bringing the Kindertransport book for me. Your kindness and concern are much appreciated. The AJR has been so kind to me. It was interesting to discover that my brother's journey to Haifa was through the work of the Jewish Society. He lived on a kibbutz and I adored him, yet in 1948 he and 28 others were ambushed and killed on Mt Carmel. The world forgets this side of the conflict. Alas, so many Jews, even now, share this suffering, as well as many others.

Renée Willis

TO FELIX

On the golden Wedding Anniversary we never had

**My dearest husband, friend of fifty years,
My lover, mentor, father, all in one,
My car mechanic, plumber, handyman
The list is long and I have scarce begun,
You were so many things to everyone**

**You mended things I broke and were my tower
Of strength; and yet you went away,
Though scared of leaving me you fought to stay.
I miss you many times in every hour
But life goes on, surprising me each day.**

**You feared I couldn't manage on my own,
But look, my love, how strong I have become!
Not needing to pick up the phone – or run
To ask our son for things *you'd* always done.
You were so many things to everyone.**

**'Ask Felix' was the motto of our friends,
You chauffeured, gave advice, tied up loose ends.
Though wise, good-humoured, generous and kind,
To faults of others you were often blind,
Bequeathing tolerance to us, who stayed behind.**

*Mary Brainin Huttner
28 February 2004*

SEARCH NOTICES

Rifka Stemmer, is looking for anyone who knew Mark Stemmer. KT to Scotland, later to Israel, died 1948 War of Independence. Contact Andrea at the AJR office

I am writing on behalf of my Father DIETER (now PETER) HAHLO, born 11 April 1926 in Germany, and now living in Surrey. He left Germany as part of the Kindertransport. He departed from Berlin Friedrichstrasse Station (mid-morning) on 14 December 1938 (aged 12), to the Hook of Holland for a night ferry, arriving Harwich on 15 December 1938 (early morning).

Last year he saw a picture in the newspaper, taken at around this time in 1938, of children arriving from Germany. He has already contacted Getty Images, who provided that image, but they did not find a picture for the particular date of his arrival. He would very much like to know if there are any other pictures stored from that time which he might feature in. As he recalls from his arrival in England:

“On descending a gangplank, a number of press photographers asked us to pose for a photograph. Harmonicas were popular at that time. I was the only one who had one in my pocket. So I was asked to pose – playing the mouth organ while sitting or kneeling on the gang plank (I think) surrounded by other children standing in a semi-circle behind me. We then boarded a train to Dover Court to stay in a holiday camp which had been opened to receive us as refugees. Our details were copied for an official entry document.”
RICHARD HAHLO, richard@hahlo.dircon.co.uk

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazeltov to Dorith Sim on the birth of her first great-grandson Josh to her granddaughter Fiona.

Mazeltov to Otto and Dorothy Fleming on the birth of a great-grandson, Max Antonio Fleming.

Congratulations to Rose and Paul Gotley on their daughter’s award by the Society for Reproductive and Infant Psychology.

Alisa Kruger, Jerusalem writes that Walter Lester (Leshinsky/Berlin) has died.

PRESS RELEASE
VALLENTINE MITCHELL PUBLISHERS
SIX FROM LEIPZIG
By Gertrude Dubrovsky

Gertrude Dubrovsky is an independent researcher who has written two other books and a number of articles. She has also produced an award-winning documentary film, *The Land Was Theirs*, on Jewish farmers and their communities.

Publication date 4 March 2004
0 8530 3470 2, 240 pages, illus., PAPERBACK £9.95
For further information contact Siobhán Daly on 020 8920 2160 or email:
Sdaly@vmbooks.com



NOTICES

Would the person writing to me about the LP video signed Ingrid please identify herself and telephone Andrea at the AJR office

You will be pleased to know that my book, now to be called *Interrupted Journeys*, will be published by Simon & Schuster in June. ALAN GILL email alangill@netspace.net.au

While telling the *Babies in the Basket* story of Emmy Mogolensky in *I came Alone* to an audience, a lady of 90 (non-Jewish) stood up and told how she, a Red Cross volunteer at Liverpool Street Station, witnessed the arrival of the babies. *Bertha*

Our KT archives are now on the Wiener Library website www.wienerlibrary.co.uk

THE JEWISH MUSEUM
Raymond Burton House
129-131 Albert Street
Camden Town, London NW1

Opening of the Exhibition
...I never saw another butterfly...
Children's Art from Theresienstadt
Wednesday 24 March 2004
Exhibition continues until 20 June 2004

Guest speakers: Nicholas Winton and Vera Gissing
